

Description

LIGHT EMITTING DIODE HAVING A DUAL DOPANT CONTACT LAYER

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a light emitting diode (LED). In particular, the present invention discloses an LED having a dual dopant contact layer.

[0003] 2. Description of the Prior Art

[0004] The light emitting diode (LED) has been widely used in various fields. For example, the light emitting diodes are capable of being installed on optical display devices, traffic lights, data storage devices, communication devices, illuminative equipment, and medical equipment. Currently, an important issue for those skilled in the art is to improve electric characteristics and brightness of the LED. An LED structure with a thin nickel-gold (Ni/Au) transparent metallic layer forming on a p-type contact layer has

been disclosed in the U.S. NO. 5,563,422 for increasing light emitted from the LED. However, the transparent metallic layer made of the above-mentioned metallic materials merely has transmittance in the range of 60%~70%. It not only affects light emitting efficiency of the LED, but also cannot provide a good current spreading effect because of its thickness being usually about 10nm.

[0005] In order to solve the above-mentioned problem, an LED with a transparent conductive oxide layer formed on a p-type contact layer having high carrier concentration has been disclosed in U.S. NO. 6,078,064. Because the transparent conductive oxide layer has high transmittance, the transparent conductive oxide layer can be thicker to better spread current in the transparent conductive oxide layer. Therefore, brightness of the LED can be increased by improving light-emitting characteristic of the LED. However, the carrier concentration of the p-type contact layer needs to be greater than $5 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to form a good ohmic contact upon the transparent conductive oxide layer. With regard to the prior art semiconductor process, the p-type contact layer having high carrier concentration, however, is not easy to manufacture. It is well-known that the p-doped layer generally contains more defects, and the hy-

drogen atoms will affect formation of the p-doped layer. The carriers with high concentration are not easy to obtain even if a large amount of p-type dopants are implanted. Though this art can effectively increase light intensity of the light emitted from the LED, contact resistance between the p-type contact layer and the transparent conductive oxide layer is so high that the forward bias voltage of the LED can adversely affect electric characteristics of the LED.

[0006] An n+ reverse tunneling contact layer has been disclosed in Taiwan Pat. No. 144415 assigned to the same assignee as the present invention. The n+ reverse tunneling contact layer is positioned between a transparent electrode layer and a semiconductor light emitting layer, and a tunneling mechanism is utilized to form an ohmic contact associated with the transparent electrode layer and the semiconductor light emitting layer. The n+ reverse tunneling contact layer, unlike the above-mentioned p-type contact layer, having high carrier concentration is utilized to reduce difficulty in manufacturing the LED. However, the n+ reverse tunneling contact layer is sensitive to its thickness and concentration of the n-type carriers. When the concentration of the n-type carriers is too low, or the n+ reverse tunneling contact layer is too thick, the tunneling

mechanism is blocked. Therefore, the formation of the n+ reverse tunneling contact layer needs to be strictly controlled.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0007] Therefore, it is an object of the invention to provide a light emitting diode (LED) with a dual dopant contact layer, wherein the contact layer is not required to provide high carrier concentration.

[0008] Briefly summarized, the first preferred embodiment of the present invention discloses a light emitting diode (LED) comprising an insulating substrate, a buffer layer formed on the insulating substrate, an n-type contact layer formed on the buffer layer, a multiple quantum well light emitting layer formed on the first upper surface, a p-type contact layer formed on the multiple quantum well light emitting layer, a dual dopant contact layer formed on the p-type contact layer, a transparent conductive oxide layer formed on the dual dopant contact layer, a p-type electrode formed on the transparent conductive oxide layer, and an n-type electrode formed on the second upper surface.

[0009] In addition, the second preferred embodiment of the present invention discloses a light emitting device (LED)

comprising an n-type electrode, an n-type conductive substrate formed on the n-type electrode, a buffer layer formed on the n-type conductive substrate, an n-type contact layer formed on the buffer layer, a multiple quantum well light emitting layer formed on the n-type contact layer, a p-type contact layer formed on the multiple quantum well light emitting layer, a dual dopant contact layer formed on the p-type contact layer, a transparent conductive oxide layer formed on the dual dopant contact layer, and a p-type electrode formed on the transparent conductive oxide layer.

[0010] It is an advantage of the present invention that a dual dopant contact layer is positioned between a transparent conductive oxide layer and the stacked semiconductor layers of the claimed LED. With the p-type carriers and the n-type carriers coexist in the dual dopant layer, the resistance associated with the ohmic contact between the transparent conductive oxide layer and the stacked semiconductor layers of the LED is reduced. The dual dopant layer has p-type carriers and n-type carriers, and conductive carriers are transmitted between the transparent conductive oxide layer and p-type cladding layer for forming a good ohmic contact when the claimed LED is powered by

a forward bias voltage. To sum up, the claimed LED is capable of greatly increasing intensity of the emitted light without seriously making the forward bias voltage raised.

[0011] These and other objects of the present invention will no doubt become obvious to those of ordinary skill in the art after reading the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, which are illustrated in the various figures and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 is a structure diagram illustrating a light emitting diode according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 2 is a structure diagram illustrating a light emitting diode according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] Please refer to FIG. 1, which is a structure diagram illustrating a light emitting diode 10 in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention. The wavelength associated with light emitted from the LED 10 is 468nm. The LED 10 has an insulating substrate 12 made of sapphire (Al_2O_3), a buffer layer 14 formed on the insulating sub-

strate 12, an n-type contact layer 16 formed on the buffer layer 14, a multiple quantum well light emitting layer 18 formed on a first surface region of the n-type contact layer 16, a p-type cladding layer 20 formed on the multiple quantum well light emitting layer 18, a p-type contact layer 22 formed on the p-type cladding layer 20, a dual dopant contact layer 24 formed on the p-type contact layer 22, a transparent conductive oxide layer 26 formed on the dual dopant contact layer 24, a p-type electrode 28 formed on the transparent conductive oxide layer 26, and an n-type electrode 30 formed on a second surface region of the n-type contact layer 16.

[0015] The dual dopant contact layer 24 is doped by p-type impurities and n-type impurities simultaneously to form both p-type carriers and n-type carriers within the dual dopant contact layer 24. In the preferred embodiment, the concentration of the dopants is equal to $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, and the thickness of the dual dopant contact layer 24 roughly equals 60 angstroms. As the experimental result shown in the following Table 1, the preferred embodiment has a forward bias voltage greater than a forward bias voltage required by a prior art LED utilizing a Ni/Au metallic layer, and the forward bias voltage is raised from 3.15V to

3.16V. Please note that the forward bias voltage is measured when 20mA current passes through the claimed LED 10 and the prior art LED. As shown in Table 1, the preferred embodiment has light intensity greater than light intensity outputted by the prior art LED utilizing the Ni/Au metallic layer, and the light intensity is raised from 25.7mcd to 34.5mcd. That is, the light intensity is improved by 34.2%. In addition, the prior art LED with an n^+ reverse tunneling contact layer is tested, and the result is shown in Table 1. It is obvious that the prior art LED with the n^+ reverse tunneling contact layer is capable of increasing the light intensity, but the required forward bias voltage is accordingly increased. Therefore, the LED 10 according to the present invention can improve the light intensity without greatly increasing the exerted forward bias voltage. Compared with the prior art LED, the LED 10 according to the present invention apparently has better performance.

Table 1

	$V_f(V)@20mA$	Intensity(mcd)
Ni/Au metallic layer	3.15	25.7
n^+ reverse tunneling contact layer	3.41	36.3
claimed LED	3.16	34.5

[0016] Please note that the formation of the dual dopant contact layer 24 is not limited by the above-mentioned manufacturing method. Taking another LED emitting light with a wavelength equaling 526nm for example, this LED has the same structure shown in FIG. 1, but the dual dopant contact layer 24 for this LED is manufactured by another process. After the p-type contact layer 22 is fabricated, an n-type InGaN contact layer with a thickness equaling 20 angstroms is then stacked on the p-type contact layer 22. After the n-type InGaN contact layer successfully grows on the p-type contact layer 22, an annealing process with a cooling rate less than 40°C/min is applied to make the

n-type dopants within the n-type InGaN contact layer and the p-type dopants within the p-type contact layer 22 diffuse to each other. Then, the original n-type InGaN contact layer contains both n-type dopants and p-type dopants, and the InGaN contact layer becomes a dual dopant contact layer. The dual dopant contact layer then has concentration of n-type carriers equaling $8 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, and has concentration of p-type carriers equaling $5 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. The experimental result associated with the above LED is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

	<u>V_f(V)@20mA</u>	<u>Intensity(mcd)</u>
Ni/Au metallic layer	3.11	137.6
N+ reverse <u>tunneling contact layer</u>	3.56	171.6
<u>claimed LED</u>	3.20	178.4

[0017] Compared to the prior art LED with the Ni/Au metallic layer, the claimed LED raises the light intensity from 137.6mcd to 178.4mcd. That is, the light intensity is then

improved by 29.8%. Similarly, the prior art LED with the n^+ reverse tunneling contact layer is tested, and the result is also shown in Table 2. It is obvious that the prior art LED with the n^+ reverse tunneling contact layer is capable of increasing the light intensity, but the required forward bias voltage is accordingly increased to be 3.56V that is greatly higher than the forward bias voltage (3.11V) required by the prior art LED with the Ni/Au metallic layer. However, the forward bias voltage measured for the claimed LED is merely raised from 3.11V to 3.20V. Therefore, the LED of to the present invention can improve the light intensity without greatly increasing the exerted forward bias voltage. Compared with the prior art LED, the LED of to the present invention apparently performs better.

[0018] Please refer to FIG. 2, which is a structure diagram illustrating a light emitting diode40 according to a second embodiment of the present invention. The structure of the LED 40 is similar to that of the LED 10 shown in FIG. 1. The only difference is that the compound semiconductor layers 44~56 are stacked on one side of an n-type conductive substrate 42 through an epitaxy growth, and an n-type electrode 60 contacts the n-type conductive sub-

strate 42 on another side. Because the substrate 42 itself is conductive, it is unnecessary to perform an etch process after those compound semiconductor layers 44~56 are successfully grown on the n-type conductive substrate 42. Please note that the compound semiconductor layers 44~56 are respectively corresponding to the buffer layer 14, the n-type contact layer 16, the multiple quantum well light emitting layer 18, the p-type cladding layer 20, the p-type contact layer 22, the dual dopant contact layer 24, and the transparent conductive oxide layer 26. In addition, a p-type electrode 58 is formed on the transparent conductive oxide layer 56.

[0019] The n-type conductive substrate 42 is made of one material selected from a material group consisting of GaN, SiC, Si, AlN, ZnO, MgO, GaP, GaAs, and Ge. The above-mentioned insulating substrate 12 is made of one semiconductor material selected from a material group consisting of sapphire, LiGaO_2 , and LiAlO_2 . The above-mentioned buffer layer 14 is made of AlInGaN-based material or II-nitride-based material. The above-mentioned multiple quantum well light emitting layer 18 comprises r InGaN quantum wells and (r+1) InGaN barriers so that both sides of each InGaN quantum well is sandwiched in

between two InGaN barriers. Please note that r is not less than 1, each InGaN quantum well is formed by $\text{In}_e\text{Ga}_{1-e}\text{N}$, and each InGaN barrier is formed by $\text{In}_f\text{Ga}_{1-f}\text{N}$ ($0 \leq f < e \leq 1$). The above-mentioned p-type cladding layer 20 comprises $\text{Al}_z\text{Ga}_{1-z}\text{N}$, wherein $0 \leq z \leq 1$. The above-mentioned transparent conductive oxide layer 26 is made of one semiconductor material selected from a material group consisting of Indium-tin oxide (ITO), Cadmium-tin oxide, Antimony-tin oxide (ATO), Zinc oxide (ZnO), and Zinc-tin oxide. The above-mentioned dual dopant contact layer 24 is made of GaN-based material. The above-mentioned n-type dopant is made of one material selected from a material group consisting of Si, Ge, Sn, Te, O, S, and C, and the p-type dopant is made of one material selected from a material group consisting of Mg, Zn, Be, and Ca.

[0020] In contrast to the prior art, the claimed LED positions a dual dopant layer between a transparent conductive oxide layer and the light emitting stacked structure. With the p-type carriers and the n-type carriers coexistent in the dual dopant layer, the resistance associated with the ohmic contact between the transparent conductive oxide layer and the light emitting stacked structure is reduced. Therefore, the claimed LED is capable of solving the problem in

the prior art. Because the dual dopant layer has p-type carriers and n-type carriers, an energy level associated with the n-type carriers and an energy level associated with the p-type carriers are located within the energy band gap of the dual dopant layer. Therefore, when the claimed LED is powered by a forward bias voltage, carriers are conductive through both coexisted energy levels. Therefore, conductive carriers are transmitted between the transparent conductive oxide layer and p-type cladding layer for forming a good ohmic contact between the transparent conductive oxide layer and the stacked semiconductor layers of the LED. With this transmission mechanism, it is unnecessary to fabricate a prior art highly doped p-type contact layer. Therefore, the problem related to forming the prior art highly doped p-type contact layer is solved by the claimed LED. In addition, the claimed LED is capable of greatly increasing intensity of the emitted light without seriously raising forward bias voltage. To sum up, the overall performance of the claimed LED is better than the performance of the prior art LED.